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ABSTRACT

A biography for elementary school students describes the life and career of Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (Sioux), a Native American free-lance writer, and includes her photograph and a map of South Dakota reservations. A story by Mrs. Sneve tells about a half-Sioux boy who confronts his heritage when his grandfather makes a long journey between his two cultures to deliver a medicine bag. A teaching guide is provided which includes learning objectives, directions for teachers, student activities, vocabulary list, resources list, and an evaluation checklist. (LFL)

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VIRGINIA DRIVING HAWK SNEVE

SIOUX

AUTHOR

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VIRGINIA DRIVING HAWK SNEVE*

SIOUX

AUTHOR

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve is a Sicangu (see-chan-ju) Sioux. She was born on February 21, 1933 and raised on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. She attended Bureau of Indian Affairs day schools on the reservation and graduated from St. Mary's Episcopal High School for Indian Girls in Springfield, South Dakota. Memories of her childhood are happy ones. While in school she particularly enjoyed reading and music. She received her Bachelor of Science and Master in Education degrees from South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota.

Mrs. Sneve believes that an education is important in today's society, and that great parental concern must accompany it. This belief is the same as that of her father, James Driving Hawk, who believed that getting an education was the way for Indian people to solve their problems. She expects her three children to become self-sufficient and concerned about others. When asked what she thought was her greatest advantage as an Indian person living in a basically non-Indian world,

*Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (surname rhymes with "navy")

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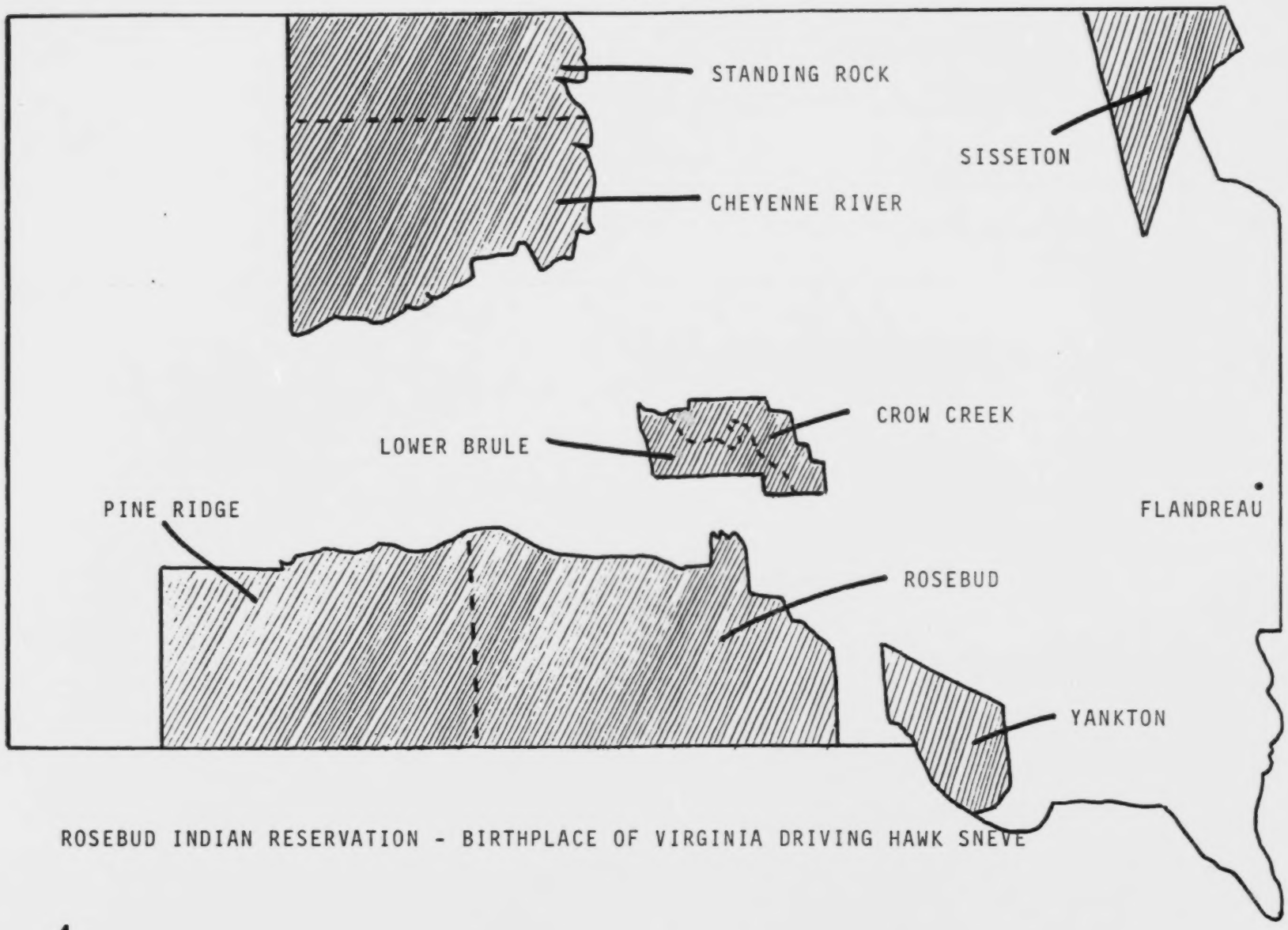
MAP OF SOUTH DAKOTA



ROSEBUD INDIAN RESERVATION - BIRTHPLACE OF VIRGINIA DRIVING HAWK SNEVE

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Mrs. Sneve responded, "the closeness of the family and our concern for the well-being of others, both spiritual and physical."

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's decision to become an author was influenced by her father; by the author, Mari Sandoz; and by reading distorted writings about Indian people. In commenting about her writing, Mrs. Sneve states, "I try to present an accurate portrayal of American Indian life as I have known it. I also attempt to interpret history from the viewpoint of the American Indian and in so doing I hope to correct the many misconceptions and untruths which have been too long perpetrated by non-Indian authors who have written about us."[1]

Virginia and her husband, Vance, and their three children, presently live in Flandreau, South Dakota where they enjoy skiing and canoeing. Mrs. Sneve plays the piano and organ for relaxation and reads prolifically. She is presently a full time free-lance writer. She also serves as a consultant editor for Brevet Press in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and as a consultant writer for Native American programming for the South Dakota Public Television Network.

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[1] Gale Research Co. Contemporary Authors, Vol. 49-52, p. 508. Detroit, Michigan: 1975.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

NATIVE AMERICANS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
VIRGINIA DRIVING HAWK SNEVE*
SIOUX
AUTHOR

I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of the Indian Elementary Curriculum Project wishes to thank the following for helping to make this biographical study unit possible:

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, for her photograph, information about her life, and use of the story, "The Medicine Bag"
Patrick Des Jarlait, Jr., for the illustrations in the Student Booklet
Boy's Life, for use of the story, "The Medicine Bag"

II. CURRICULUM UNIT

Native Americans of the Twentieth Century --
Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

See the Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve booklet.

IV. STUDENT ACTIVITIES

See VII, Directions and Procedures for Teachers
Activity One (Optional Worksheet): The Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman
Multiple Choice

V. OBJECTIVES

A. Given the background information:

1. The students will correctly state that Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's profession is writing;

*Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve (surname rhymes with "navy")

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2. The students will accurately state that Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve often depicts Sioux life in her writing;

3. The students will correctly identify three factors that influence Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve to write.

B. The students will accurately locate the Rosebud Reservation on a map of South Dakota.

C. The students will select an interest in their lives and write or draw creatively about it.

D. Having read or listened to Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's story, "The Medicine Bag," the students will compare their experiences with those related by her.

VI. MATERIALS NEEDED

A. Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve booklet.

B. "The Medicine Bag" story.

C. Optional Worksheet: The Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman Multiple Choice.

VII. DIRECTIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR TEACHERS

A. Tell the students about the life of Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve and discuss the information provided in the booklet.

B. Read the attached story "The Medicine Bag" by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve to the students. Have them draw the following: Grandpa as he arrived at Martin's house; Grandpa's home on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota; Grandpa's medicine bag; or other selections.

C. Have the students locate the Rosebud Reservation on a map of South Dakota.

D. Display some of Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's books in the classroom.

E. Have the students select an interest in their lives and write or draw creatively about it.

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VIII. CONCEPTS AND VOCABULARY

A. Author - a person who writes a book, story, article, etc.

B. Contemporary - of the present time.

C. Day school - a school that has classes only during the day and does not board its pupils.

D. Descendant - the child, grandchild, etc., of an ancestor.

E. Free-lance writer - a writer who works independently, often for different employers.

F. Mari Sandoz - an author who worked for the Nebraska State Historical Society as a proofreader and researcher on Sioux Indians. She was interested in justice for the American Indian. She wrote: Cheyenne Autumn, Battle of the Little Bighorn, Crazy Horse, These were the Sioux, Old Jules, and other books.

G. Prairie sage - a plant with grayish-green leaves used as medicine.

H. Profession - occupation.

I. Quest - a search for something.

J. Rosebud - a Sioux reservation in South Dakota.

K. Sicangu (see-chan-ju) - the name of a band of Sioux Indians. The name is literally translated as Sican = thing, Gu = burned. According to one version, a band of Sioux Indians was caught in a prairie fire, and when they fled from the flames, they burned their legs and thighs. They were then called "Burnt Thigh." In another version, the Arapahoe saw the band of Sioux Indians coming and set fire to the prairie. The band was caught in the fire, burning their legs and thighs as they escaped. This band was then amusingly called the "Burned Thighs."[1]

L. Sioux - a Plains tribe of North American Indian people who call themselves Dakota, which means "league" or "alliance."

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[1]Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, Dakota's Heritage (Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 1973), p. 2.

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IX. ACTIVITY VARIATIONS

A. Have the students identify other authors.

B. Read Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's book The Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman and complete the worksheet provided in this unit (this is an optional activity for upper elementary grades).

C. Have the students tell about a scary experience, such as that described by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve in her book, The Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman, while the teacher records it. Have the students draw pictures of these experiences.

X. RESOURCES

Contemporary publications by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve include:

(Fiction)

Betrayed. New York: Holiday House, 1974.
A story of white settlers who are captured by the Dakota Indians during the 1862 Sioux Uprising.

The Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman. New York: Holiday House, 1975.
While visiting their Sioux grandparents, three young cousins are convinced that they have found a real bogeyman.

High Elk's Treasure. New York: Holiday House, 1972.
Joe High Elk takes refuge from a storm in a cave. There he finds an old rawhide bundle.

Jimmy Yellow Hawk. New York: Holiday House, 1972.
A Sioux boy wants to change his name from Little Jim because he does not consider himself a child anymore.

"The Medicine Bag," Boy's Life, March, 1975. (included in this unit)

When Thunders Spoke. New York: Holiday House, 1974.
After fifteen-year-old Norman Two Bull, a Sioux, finds a sacred coup stick, unusual things begin to happen to his family.

(Non-fiction)

Dakota's Heritage. Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Brevet Press, 1973.

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South Dakota Geographic Names. (Editor) Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Brevet Press, 1973.

They Led a Nation. Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Brevet Press, 1975.

Other Resources:

Gale Research Company. Contemporary Authors. Vol. 49-52, p. 508. Detroit, Michigan: Gale Research Company, 1975.

Sandoz, Mari. Battle of the Little Bighorn. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966.

Sandoz, Mari. Cheyenne Autumn. New York: McGraw, 1953.

Sandoz, Mari. Crazy Horse. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, Bison Book, 1961.

Sandoz, Mari. Old Jules. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1935.

Sandoz, Mari. These Were the Sioux. New York: Hastings House, 1961.

XI. EVALUATION

A. Did the students state that Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's profession is writing?

B. Did the students locate the Rosebud Reservation on a map of South Dakota?

C. Did the students identify aspects of Sioux life as depicted in the writing of Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve?

D. Did the students identify some factors that influence Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve to write?

E. Did the students select something of interest and write or draw creatively about it?

F. Did the students compare their experiences with those related by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve in her story, "The Medicine Bag"?

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THE CHICHI HOOHOO BOGEYMAN MULTIPLE CHOICE

(optional)

1. A scary character among the Sioux people is called a:

   A. Chichi
   B. Hoohoo
   C. Bogeyman

2. What kind of warning followed Uncle George and his family?

   A. Thunder and lightning
   B. Honking of his car horn
   C. Kachina doll

3. The Hopi Indians in the story live in:

   A. Brick houses
   B. Teepees
   C. Pueblos

4. What did the girls cross even though they were told by their Grandma not to?

   A. River
   B. Field
   C. Road

5. Grandpa let the girls go for a ride down the river in a:

   A. Boat
   B. Ship
   C. Canoe

6. Who could not talk?

   A. Grandpa
   B. Andy
   C. Uncle George

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7. As the Chichi Hoohoo Bogeyman ran after the girls, he reached out and tried to grab Lori's:

   A. Arm
   B. Leg
   C. Braids

8. Who decided to go home to Pine Ridge without telling anyone?

   A. Cindy
   B. Mary Jo
   C. Lori

9. When Cindy was found, she got to ride in a(n):

   A. Airplane
   B. Train
   C. Highway patrol car

10. Where did Uncle George and his family finally decide to live?

   A. Aberdeen
   B. Pine Ridge
   C. With the Hopi Indians on the mesa

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ANSWERS

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. C
6. B
7. C
8. A
9. C
10. C

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The Medicine Bag

by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

It's exciting to have a Sioux grandpa on the reservation to brag about, but what if he comes to visit your home?

My kid sister Cheryl and I always bragged about our Sioux grandpa, Joe Iron Shell. Our friends, who had always lived in the city and only knew about Indians from movies and TV, were impressed by our stories. Maybe we exaggerated and made Grandpa and the reservation sound glamorous, but when we'd return home to Iowa after our yearly summer visit to Grandpa we always had some exciting tale to tell.

We always had some authentic Sioux article to show our listeners. One year Cheryl had new moccasins that Grandpa had made. On another visit he gave me a small, round, flat, rawhide drum which was decorated with a painting of a warrior riding a horse. He taught me a real Sioux chant to sing while I beat the drum with a leather-covered stick that had a feather on the end. Man, that really made an impression.

We never showed our friends Grandpa's picture. Not that we were ashamed of him, but because we knew that the glamorous tales we told didn't go with the real thing. Our friends would have laughed at the picture, because Grandpa wasn't tall and stately like TV Indians. His hair wasn't in braids, but hung in stringy, gray strands on his neck and he was old. He was our great-grandfather, and he didn't live in a tipi, but all by himself in a part log,

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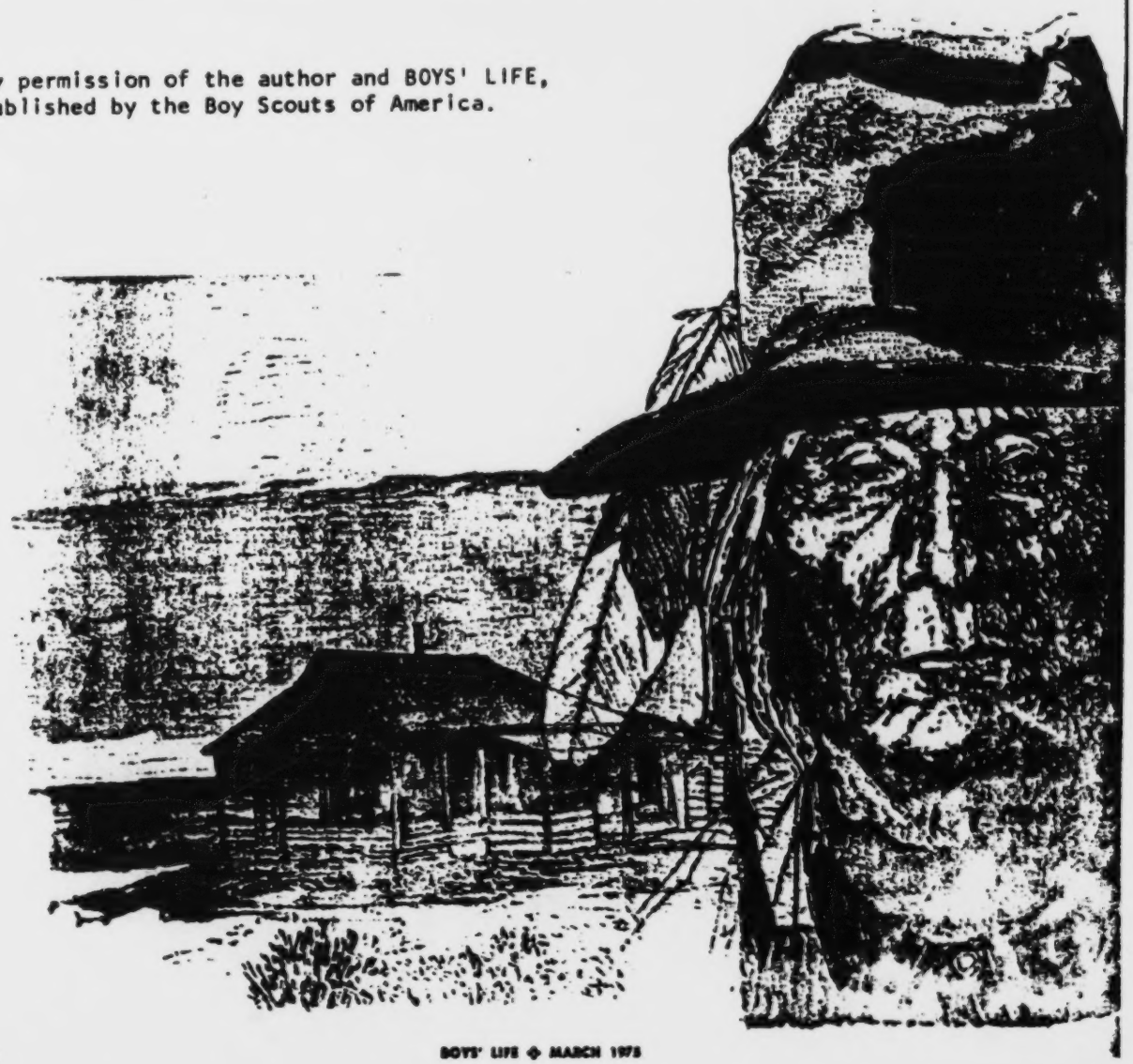

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part tar-paper shack on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. So when Grandpa came to visit us, I was so ashamed and embarrassed I could've died.

There are a lot of yippy poodles and other fancy little dogs in our neighborhood, but they usually barked singly at the mailman from the safety of their own yards. Now it sounded as if a whole pack of mutts were barking together in one place.

I got up and walked to the curb to see what the commotion was. About a block away I saw a crowd of little kids yelling, with the dogs yipping and growling around someone who was walking down the middle of the street.

I watched the group as it slowly came closer and saw that in the center of the strange procession was a man wearing a tall black hat. He'd pause now and then to peer at something in his hand and then at the houses on either side of the street. I felt cold and hot at the same time as I recognized the man. "Oh, no!" I whispered. "It's Grandpa!"

I stood on the curb, unable to move even though I wanted to run and hide. Then I got mad when I saw how the yippy dogs were growling and nipping at the old man's baggy pant legs and how wearily he poked them away with his cane. "Stupid mutts," I said as I ran to rescue Grandpa.

When I kicked and hollered at the dogs to get away, they put their tails between their legs and scattered. The kids ran to the curb where they watched me and the old man.

"Grandpa," I said and felt pretty dumb when my voice cracked. I reached for his beat-up old tin suitcase, which was tied shut with a rope. But he set it down right in the street and shook my hand.

"*Hau, Takoza,* Grandchild," he greeted me formally in Sioux.

All I could do was stand there with the whole neighborhood watching and shake the hand of the leather-brown old man. I saw how his gray hair straggled from under his big black hat, which ▶

Grandpa walked all the way.

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had a drooping feather in its crown. His rumpled black suit hung like a sack over his stooped frame. As he shook my hand, his coat fell open to expose a bright-red, satin shirt with a beaded bolo tie under the collar. His getup wasn't out of place on the reservation, but it sure was here, and I wanted to sink right through the pavement.

"Hi," I muttered with my head down. I tried to pull my hand away when I felt his bony hand trembling, and looked up to see fatigue in his face. I felt like crying. I couldn't think of anything to say so I picked up Grandpa's suitcase, took his arm, and guided him up the driveway to our house.

Mom was standing on the steps. I don't know how long she'd been watching, but her hand was over her mouth and she looked as if she couldn't believe what she saw. Then she ran to us.

"Grandpa," she gasped. "How in the world did you get here?"

She checked her move to embrace Grandpa and I remembered that such a display of affection is unseemly to the Sioux and would embarrass him.

"*Hau*, Marie," he said as he shook Mom's hand. She smiled and took his other arm.

As we supported him up the steps the door banged open and Cheryl came bursting out of the house. She was all smiles and was so obviously glad to see Grandpa that I was ashamed of how I felt.

"Grandpa!" she yelled happily. "You came to see us!"

Grandpa smiled and Mom and I let go of him as he stretched out his arms to my 10-year-old sister, who was still young enough to be hugged.

"*Wicincala*, little girl," he greeted her and then collapsed.

He had fainted. Mom and I carried him into her sewing room, where we had a spare bed.

After we had Grandpa on the bed Mom stood there helplessly patting his shoulder.

"Shouldn't we call the doctor, Mom?" I suggested, since she didn't seem to know what to do.

"Yes," she agreed with a sigh. "You make Grandpa comfortable, Martin."

I reluctantly moved to the bed. I knew Grandpa wouldn't want to have Mom undress him, but I didn't want to, either. He was so skinny and frail that his coat slipped off easily. When I loosened his tie and opened his shirt collar, I felt a small leather pouch that hung from a thong around his neck. I left it alone and moved to remove his boots. The scuffed old cowboy boots were tight and he moaned as I put pressure on his legs to jerk them off.

I put the boots on the floor and saw why they fit so tight. Each one was stuffed with money. I looked at the bills that lined the boots and started to ask about them, but Grandpa's eyes were closed again.

Mom came back with a basin of water. "The doctor thinks Grandpa is suffering from heat exhaustion," she explained as she bathed Grandpa's face. Mom gave a big sigh, "*Oh hinh*, Martin. How do you suppose he got here?"

We found out after the doctor's visit. Grandpa was angrily sitting up in bed while Mom tried to feed him some soup.

"Tonight you let Marie feed you, Grandpa," spoke my dad, who had gotten home from work just as the doctor was leaving. "You're not really sick," he said as he gently pushed Grandpa back against the pillows. "The doctor said you just got too tired and hot after your long trip."

Grandpa relaxed, and between sips of soup he told us of his journey. Soon after our visit to him Grandpa decided that he would like to see where his only living descendants lived and what our home was like. Besides, he admitted sheepishly, he was lonesome after we left.

I knew everybody felt as guilty as I did—especially Mom. Mom was all Grandpa had left. So even after she married my dad, who's a white man and teaches in the college in our city, and after Cheryl and I were born, Mom made sure that every summer we spent a week with Grandpa.

I never thought that Grandpa would be lonely after our visits, and none of us noticed how old and weak he had become. But Grandpa knew and so he came to us. He had ridden on buses for two and a half days. When he arrived in the city, tired and stiff from sitting for so long, he set out, walking, to find us.

He had stopped to rest on the steps of some building downtown and a policeman found him. The cop, according to Grandpa, was a good man who took him to the bus stop and waited until the bus came and told the driver to let Grandpa out at Bell View Drive. After Grandpa got off the bus, he started walking again. But he couldn't see the house numbers on the other side when he walked on the sidewalk so he walked in the middle of the street. That's when all the little kids and dogs followed him.

I knew everybody felt as bad as I did. Yet I was proud of this 86-year-old man, who had never been away from the reservation, having the courage to travel so far alone.

"You found the money in my boots?" he asked Mom.

"Martin did," she answered, and roused herself to scold. "Grandpa, you shouldn't have carried so much money. What if someone had stolen it from you?"

Grandpa laughed. "I would've known if anyone tried to take the boots off my feet. The money is what I've saved for a long time—a hundred dollars—for my funeral. But you take it now to buy groceries so that I won't be a burden to you while I am here."

"That won't be necessary, Grandpa," Dad said. "We are ➤

Grandpa told how he'd killed the deer from which he made his vest, as my buddies listened with awe and pleasure.

Illustrated by Anthony Saris

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honored to have you with us and you will never be a burden. I am only sorry that we never thought to bring you home with us this summer and spare you the discomfort of a long trip."

Grandpa was pleased. "Thank you," he answered. "But do not feel bad that you didn't bring me with you for I would not have come then. It was not time." He said this in such a way that no one could argue with him. To Grandpa and the Sioux, he once told me, a thing would be done when it was the right time to do it and that's the way it was.

"Also," Grandpa went on, looking at me, "I have come because it is soon time for Martin to have the medicine bag."

We all knew what that meant. Grandpa thought he was going to die and he had to follow the tradition of his family to pass the medicine bag, along with its history, to the oldest male child.

"Even though the boy," he said still looking at me, "bears a white man's name, the medicine bag will be his."

I didn't know what to say. I had the same hot and cold feeling that I had when I first saw Grandpa in the street. The medicine bag was the dirty leather pouch I had found around his neck. "I could never wear such a thing," I almost said aloud. I thought of having my friends see it in gym class, at the swimming pool, and could imagine the smart things they would say. But I just swallowed hard and took a step toward the bed. I knew I would have to take it.

But Grandpa was tired. "Not now, Martin," he said, waving his hand in dismissal, "it is not time. Now I will sleep."

So that's how Grandpa came to be with us for two months. My friends kept asking to come see the old man, but I put them off. I told myself that I didn't want them laughing at Grandpa. But even as I made excuses I knew it wasn't Grandpa that I was afraid they'd laugh at.

Nothing bothered Cheryl about bringing her friends to see Grandpa. Every day after school started there'd be a crew of giggling little girls or round-eyed little boys crowded around the old man on the patio, where he'd gotten in the habit of sitting every afternoon.

Grandpa would smile in his gentle way and patiently answer their questions, or he'd tell them stories of brave warriors, ghosts, animals, and the kids listened in awed silence. Those little guys thought Grandpa was great.

Finally, one day after school, my friends came home with me because nothing I said stopped them. "We're going to see the great Indian of Bell View Drive," said Hank, who was supposed to be my best friend. "My brother has seen him three times so he oughta be well enough to see us."

When we got to my house Grandpa was sitting on the patio. He had on his red shirt, but today he also wore a fringed leather vest that was decorated with beads. Instead of his usual cowboy boots he had solidly beaded moccasins on his feet that stuck out of his black trousers. Of course, he had his old black hat on—he was seldom without it. But it had been brushed and the feather in the beaded headband was proudly erect, its tip a brighter white. His hair lay in silver strands over the red shirt collar.

I stared just as my friends did and I heard one of them murmur, "Wow!"

Grandpa looked up and when his eyes met mine they twinkled as if he were laughing inside. He nodded to me and my face got all hot. I could tell that he had known all along I was afraid he'd embarrass me in front of my friends.

"*Hau, koksilas*, boys," he greeted and held out his hand.

My buddies passed in a single file and shook his hand as I introduced them. They were so polite I almost laughed. "How, there, Grandpa," and even a "How-do-you-do, sir."

"You look fine, Grandpa," I said as the guys sat on the lawn chairs or on the patio floor.

"*Hanh*, yes," he agreed. "When I woke up this morning it seemed the right time to dress in the good clothes. I knew that my grandson would be bringing his friends."

"You guys want some lemonade or something?" I offered. No one answered. They were listening to Grandpa as he started telling how he'd killed the deer from which his vest was made.

Grandpa did most of the talking while my friends were there. I was so proud of him and amazed at how respectfully quiet my buddies were. Mom had to chase them home at supper time. As they left they shook Grandpa's hand again and said to me:

"Martin, he's really great!"

"Yeah, man! Don't blame you for keeping him to yourself."

"Can we come back?"

But after they left, Mom said, "No more visitors for a while, Martin. Grandpa won't admit it, but his strength hasn't returned. He likes having company, but it tires him."

That evening Grandpa called me to his room before he went to sleep. "Tomorrow," he said, "when you come home, it will be time to give you the medicine bag."

I felt a hard squeeze from where my heart is supposed to be and was scared, but I answered, "OK, Grandpa."

All night I had weird dreams about thunder and lightning on a high hill. From a distance I heard the slow beat of a drum. When I woke up in the morning I felt as if I hadn't slept at all. At school it seemed as if the day would never end and, when it finally did, I ran home.

Grandpa was in his room, sitting on the bed. The shades were down and the place was dim and cool. I sat on the floor in front of Grandpa, but he didn't even look at me. After what seemed a long time he spoke.

"I sent your mother and sister away. What you will hear today is only for a man's ears. What you will receive is only for a man's hands." He fell silent and I felt shivers down my back.

"My father in his early manhood," Grandpa began, "made a vision quest to find a spirit guide for his life. You cannot understand how it was in that time, when the great Teton Sioux were first made to stay on the reservation. There was a strong need for guidance from *Wakantanka*, the Great Spirit. But too many of the young men were filled with despair and hatred. They thought it was hopeless to search for a vision when the glorious life was gone and only the hated confines of a reservation lay ahead. But my father held to the old ways.

"He carefully prepared for his quest with a purifying sweat bath and then he went alone to a high butte top to fast and pray. After three days he received his sacred dream—in which he found, after long searching, the white man's iron. He did not understand his vision of finding something belonging to the white people, for in that time they were the enemy. When he came down from the butte to cleanse himself at the stream below, he found the remains of a campfire and the broken shell of an iron kettle. This was a sign which reinforced his dream. He took a piece of the iron for his medicine bag, which he had made of elk skin years before, to prepare for his quest.

"He returned to his village, where he told his dream to the wise old men of the tribe. They gave him the name *Iron Shell*, but neither did they understand the meaning of the dream. This first Iron Shell kept the piece of iron with him at all times and believed it gave him protection from the evils of those unhappy days.

"Then a terrible thing happened to Iron Shell. He and several other young men were taken from their homes by the soldiers and sent far away to a white man's boarding school. He was angry and lonesome for his parents and the young girl he had wed before he was taken away. At first Iron Shell resisted the teachers' attempts to change him and he did not try to learn. One day it was his turn to work in the school's blacksmith shop. As he walked into the place he knew that his medicine had brought him there to learn and work with the white man's iron.

"Iron Shell became a blacksmith and worked at the trade when he returned to the reservation. All of his life he treasured the medicine bag. When he was old, and I was a man, he gave it to me, for no one made the vision quest any more."

Grandpa quit talking and I stared in disbelief as he covered his face with his hands. His shoulders were shaking with quiet sobs and I looked away until he began to speak again.

"I kept the bag until my son, your mother's father, was a man and had to leave us to fight in the war across the ocean. I gave him the bag, for I believed it would protect him in battle, but he did not take it with him. He was afraid that he would lose it. He died in a faraway place."

The time had come to pass the medicine bag and its story to the oldest male child—to me!

Again Grandpa was still and I felt his grief around me.

"My son," he went on after clearing his throat, "had only a daughter and it is not proper for her to know of these things."

He unbuttoned his shirt, pulled out the leather pouch, and lifted it over his head. He held it in his hand, turning it over and over as if memorizing how it looked.

"In the bag," he said as he opened it and removed two objects, "is the broken shell of the iron kettle, a pebble from the butte, and a piece of the sacred sage." He held the pouch upside down and dust drifted down.

"After the bag is yours you must put a piece of prairie sage within and never open it again until you pass it on to your son." He replaced the pebble and the piece of iron, and tied the bag.

I stood up, somehow knowing I should. Grandpa slowly rose from the bed and stood upright in front of me holding the bag before my face. I closed my eyes and waited for him to slip it over my head. But he spoke.

"No, you need not wear it." He placed the soft leather bag in my right hand and closed my other hand over it. "It would not be right to wear it in this time and place where no one will understand. Put it safely away until you are again on the reservation. Wear it then, when you replace the sacred sage."

Grandpa turned and sat again on the bed. Wearily he leaned his head against the pillow. "Go," he said, "I will sleep now."

"Thank you, Grandpa," I said softly and left with the bag in my hands.

That night Mom and Dad took Grandpa to the hospital. Two weeks later I stood alone on the lonely prairie of the reservation and put the sacred sage in my medicine bag. ◆

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